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ABSTRACT

This study provides psycho-educational information about Afro-American, Asian American, Anglo-American and Hispanic-American secondary students identified for the California Mentally Gifted Minor program by the non-test method. Five self-report affective instruments given to the 193 tenth grade students participating in the study are described. Data relating to the students' self-concepts, locus of control, and attitudes toward school are presented. Also discussed are findings concerning racial group comparisons which indicate that gifted students from low socioeconomic status groups or varied racial backgrounds respond differently to attitudinal self-report measures. The results of this study are compared and contrasted with findings presented in other published research. (EB)

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A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF GIFTED MINORITY GROUP STUDENTS IDENTIFIED WITHOUT RELIANCE ON APTITUDE TESTS

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Abstract

One hundred ninety-three tenth grade students from 46 high schools completed five self-report affective measures. All subjects had been identified for California's Mentally Gifted Minor program using a placement procedure that did not rely on aptitude test, I.Q. scores. Data relating to the students' self-concept, locus of control, and attitudes toward school are presented. In addition, information gathered from racial group comparisons are also described.

A Psycho-Educational Profile of Gifted Minority Group Students Identified Without Reliance on Aptitude Tests

In recent years there has been an ever increasing impetus to bring to the public's awareness the injustices resulting from the use of educational and psychological tests with minority and low socioeconomic status (SES) students. The genesis of these injustices are generally related to the belief that the traditional testing procedures used in our schools do not adequately or fairly assess the capabilities of youngsters who do not belong to the Anglo, middle-class culture, e.g., minority group children (Messick & Anderson, 1974). Some critics (Tyler & Wolf, 1974) go so far as to claim that intelligence testing is used by those in the majority to perpetuate the lower status of those in the minority by excluding certain groups from the mainstream of society (Thomas, 1970; Williams, 1972, 1974).

Given this contention, it is imperative that educational researchers pay serious attention to the issue of testing (Nader, 1976). This becomes increasingly important in light of the fact that standardized intelligence tests are the primary measures used for selecting, classifying, and placing minority group and low SES youngsters into special education programs. Such a task becomes especially important since there is evidence which indicates that the number of minority group children in educable mentally retarded, educationally handicapped, and learning disabled classes is disproportionately large, while at the same time the number of minority group children in classes for the Mentally Gifted Minor (MGM) is disproportionately small (Williams, 1972). The presumption, of course, is that because intelligence test

scores have been the most important criteria used for MGM placement, smaller numbers of minority group children are identified as "gifted" and subsequently placed into MGM programs (Fitz-Gibbon, 1974; Williams & Williams, 1978).

The State of California, in an effort to formulate more effective procedures for identifying non-majority group students, now includes in its Education Code provisions for selection and placement that extend beyond mere test scores, i.e., separate criteria method. The Code specifies that the general intellectual capacity of the child shall be determined by one or more of several factors: achievement, test scores, and/or the judgment of teachers, school administrators, and supervisors. It further asserts that placement criteria, other than the above three, are to be considered for the culturally disadvantaged child; intellectual ability cannot be determined solely by scores on tests purporting to measure intellectual aptitude (California Education Codes 6421 and 6422, 1975).

The implementation of these new criteria for the identification of students has resulted in an increase in the number of MGM programs with constitutents from the minority and low SES population. The change in the composition of the gifted population has produced concerns among educators regarding gifted students' school adjustment, e.g., feelings of alienation, self-concept, and difficulties differentiating cultural values from formal school expectations (Noble & Manrique, 1977).

The purpose of this study was to provide psycho-educational information about four racial groups of youngsters identified for the State of California MGM program by the non-test method. Data relating to the students' self-concepts, locus of control, and attitudes toward

school will be presented. In addition, information gathered from group comparisons will also be described.

Methodology

Subjects

The sample consisted of 193 10th grade students from 46 high schools in a urban California school district. The ages of the students ranged from 14 to 17 years, with the mean age being 15 years, 1 month. The following four racial groups were identified: Anglo-American (n = 40), Asian-American (n = 34), Black-American (n = 69), and Hispanic-American (n = 50).

All students particpating in the study had been identified by district school psychologists as gifted, and subsequently placed in the State's Mentally Gifted Minor (MGM) program. The procedure used to identify subjects was the separate criteria method. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis.

Procedure

Five self-report affective instruments comprised the battery which was given to the students participating in this study. All five instruments were administered by the investigator to subjects at their home schools in a single group setting. A brief description of each instrument follows.

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Harris, 1969) is an 80-item scale assessing one's self-concept, particularly physical aspects, abilities, and personality. Raw scores between 46 and 60 are considered average. The mean of the normative sample was 51.84, and the standard deviation 13.87.

Self-Esteem Inventory, Form A (Coopersmith, 1967) is a 58-item inventory designed to provide a general assessment of self-esteem. The scale measures evaluative attitudes toward the self in several areas of experience, e.g., social, academic, family, and personal. A maximum score of 50 can be earned. Typical means range from 35 to 40, and standard deviations from 5.5 to 6.5.

Locus of Control Questionnaire is a 16-item instrument with each item consisting of an external and internal response from which the subject makes a choice. The total number of internal and external responses are calculated so that an external total score and an internal score can be determined. The possible range for both scores is from 1 to 16, with their combined value not exceeding 16. A high internal score, with a low external score, indicates that the subject perceives events as being consequential to his own actions and thereby under his personal control. Conversely, a low internal score, with an accompanying high external score, indicates that a subject views events as being unrelated to his own behavior and therefore beyond personal control. An internal consistency reliability coefficient of .64 was reported by Sallander (1975).

Attitude Toward School Questionnaire is a 69-item scale with four-option responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire is intended to measure a subject's attitudes regarding school, teachers and learning. The items are categorized according to whether the statement is indicative of a positive or negative school attitude. A subject's responses are coded based on the following scheme: strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. A mean score ranging from 1.0 to 4.0 is calculated for both the positive

and negative items. The higher the mean score, the more positive or negative the subject's attitude. The measure has a reliability coefficient of .75 (Sallander, 1975).

Self-Concept as a Learner Questionnaire is a 24-item scale measuring self-concept as a learner. Responses range from excellent to poor. Each subject's responses are coded based on the following: excellent = 5, very good = 4, good = 3, not so good = 2, and poor = 1. For each subject a mean score is calculated, with the possible range being from 1 to 5. The higher the mean score, the more favorable the self-concept; the lower the mean score, the more negative the self-concept. An internal consistency reliability coefficient of .91 for this questionnaire was reported (Sallander, 1975).

Each of the three questionnaires was developed by the Teacher Development Division of the Far West Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, California, in 1973.

Results

The purpose of this investigation was to (1) present psycho-educational information, e.g., self-concept, on the sample of mentally gifted students, and (2) determine if the four racial groups comprising this group differed with respect to their attitudinal responses. The means, standard deviations, and analyses of variance on the five affective measures for the total group and the racial groups are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Total Group Results

The data obtained from the total sample indicate that on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale the total group and three of the racial groups, i.e., Anglo-, Black-, and Hispanic-Americans, obtained higher mean scores than did the norm group. On the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the total sample's mean score was within the range of means reported by the test developers, as were those of the Anglo-, Black-, and Hispanic-American racial groups. However, the mean score for the Asians was below this range.

The results from the three questionnaires further indicate that as a group the gifted student sample received (1) higher internal ($\bar{X}$ = 11.79) than external ($\bar{X}$ = 4.06) locus of control scores; (2) higher scores for those items indicative of a positive ($\bar{X}$ = 2.79) rather than a negative ($\bar{X}$ = 1.95) school attitude; and (3) a mean score ($\bar{X}$ = 3.59) which indicates that the subjects believe themselves to be "good" or "very good" learners.

Racial Group Results

Separate one way analyses of variance tests computed independently demonstrated statistically significant differences between the four racial groups on two of the five dependent affective measures. The results are presented in Table 1.

First, the data indicate a significant difference ($p < .01$) among students from the various racial backgrounds on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Scheffé's test showed that the significant difference in mean scores can be attributed to the high mean score obtained by the Black subjects ($\bar{X}$ = 63.45) and the low group mean score of the Asians ($\bar{X}$ = 61.98).

A significant difference ($p < .05$) in scores among the four racial groups was also found for the Self-Concept as a Learner Questionnaire. Results from the Scheffé test indicated that, as was true for the Piers-Harris measure, the significant difference found on the Self-Concept Questionnaire was caused by the high mean score of the Black group ($\bar{X} = 3.71$) and the low self-concept score of the Asians ($\bar{X} = 3.35$).

Similar analyses of variance tests on the three remaining affective measures yielded no significant differences among the racial groups. What is interesting to note, however, are the directional trends of the means obtained by the groups. For example, on the third self-concept measure, the Coopersmith, the Asian-American group again received the lowest mean score. Second, with regard to the locus of control variable, the Hispanic students obtained the highest internal locus of control scores and the Anglos the lowest. A converse relationship among these two racial groups was found for the external locus of control measure. Lastly, when the groups' means were compared on the variable of positive or negative attitude toward school, the most favorable attitudes were held by the Black students and the least favorable by the Asians.

Discussion

This research was concerned with assessing the attitudinal responses of minority group and low socioeconomic status youngsters identified as mentally gifted by a placement procedure which does not use an intelligence test score as its primary criterion, i.e., separate criteria method.

The results indicated that with regard to the variable of self-concept, this sample of gifted students obtained (1) general self-concept scores higher than those of the general population; (2) academically related self-concept scores that were positive; and (3) self-esteem scores

higher than those of the reported norm groups. Past research examining the relationship between minority group or low SES group membership and self-evaluation ratings have yielded similar findings (Green & Rohwer, 1971; Soares & Soares, 1969, 1970; Trowbridge, 1970, 1972; Zirkel & Moses, 1971). In explaining such findings, Yancey, Rigsby, and McCarthy (1972) contend that racial status has little or no effect upon self-evaluation and psychological difficulties when social position dimensions are controlled.

Another important finding was that these gifted students tended to have higher internal than external locus of control scores. In other words, their belief is that the reinforcements they receive are contingent upon their own actions, not the actions of others; and they, not others, shape their fate. Some previous research would not lead us to expect this finding. For example, there is evidence suggesting that lower SES and minority group status are related to external rather than internal locus of control (DuCette & Wolk, 1972; Phares, 1973). At the same time, however, Lombardo and Berzonsky (1975) found that a correlation appears to exist between self-concept and locus of control: internal persons are more self-accepting than external persons. It therefore seems plausible that because the youngsters in this study tended to see themselves in a positive light, as reflected by their high self-concept scores, they also tend to be internally oriented rather than externally oriented, regardless of their class or racial membership.

A third finding was that this sample of gifted students tended to have positive attitudes toward school, their teachers, and learning. The very fact that these youngsters are tagged with a "gifted" level might suggest that they would also tend to have had more favorable

educational experiences than students without this label. Consequently, regardless of the assessment procedure used to identify their giftedness or their racial or socioeconomic class affiliation, like other gifted students, they tend to view school in a positive rather than a negative light (Tidwell, 1978).

In addition to providing psycho-educational information about the subjects, the study also had as its purpose to answer the question, "Do Gifted students from low socioeconomic status groups or varied racial backgrounds respond differently to attitudinal self-report measures?" The findings clearly indicate an answer in the affirmative direction. The results for the mean group ratings indicated that on two self-concept measures, i.e., the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and the Self-Concept as a Learner Questionnaire, the groups' scores were significantly different. In both instances the Black-American students tended to have the highest self-concept scores and the Asian students the lowest.

The pattern of results indicating a significantly higher self-concept for the Black gifted students is consistent with the findings of several researchers (Bartee, 1967; Circirelli, 1977; Larkin, 1972; Powers, Drane, Close, Noonan, Wines, & Marshall, 1971; Soares & Soares, 1969). At the same time, however, this finding is contradictory with the finding of those who contend that no self-concept differences exist between the various racial groups (Douglas, 1971; Gibby & Gabler, 1967; Moses, Zirkel & Green, 1973; and Powers, 1971), or those who maintain that the self-concepts of Blacks are actually lower than those from other racial groups (Deutsch, 1960; Long & Hendersin, 1968; and Wylie, 1963).

Moreover, there is the issue of the Asian-American gifted group's lower concept scores when compared with the other three racial groups.

Although there is not abundant research examining the self-concept of Asians, some Chinese and Japanese-American students have been found to feel less autonomous and more anxious, nervous, lonely, alienated, and rejected than other students (Sue & Frank, 1973; Sue & Kirk, 1973). At the same time Sue (1977) has found that the Asian-American group have higher educational and economic attainments than the rest of the nation. Caution is stressed should the conclusion imply that all Asians live by the "success myth"; all have similar academic goals; or all have identical personality characteristics (Sue & Sue, 1973). However, it is possible to argue that the Asians' low self-concept scores might be due to the perceived dissonance between the need for academic achievement and the feelings of alienation, rejection, etc. Some support for this speculation is seen in the negative attitudes displayed by the Asian group on the Attitude Toward School Questionnaire.

The results also suggest that the Hispanic students, more than any other racial group in the study, viewed themselves as being largely in control of their own lives and the events that influence them (internal locus of control). Although caution must be exercised in comparing this gifted group with students in the average population, this finding is counter to the few studies which have shown that Hispanic subjects receive higher external reinforcements scores on tests of locus of control (Lefcourt, 1966; Rotter, 1966). It remains to be explained why the gifted Hispanic students in this sample received the highest internal locus of control scores and, conversely the lowest external scores. One possible factor must be socioeconomic status. Since, as seen in the work of Stone and Ruiz (1974), higher external locus of control scores among Latinos disappear when SES is controlled. However, since in this

study SES was not examined, its relationship to the Hispanic group locus of control mean score remains only speculative.

The topic explored in this study, i.e., an analysis of minority group youngsters included in mentally gifted programs without relying on I.Q. scores, deserves more attention. The data gathered from 193 volunteer subjects is obviously too small to make far-reaching generalizations. It is hoped, however, that the results of the study will encourage further exploration of this neglected area, so that over time an accumulation of evidence might provide sound guidance to those responsible for ensuring that all students, regardless of race or class, have equal access to educational tracks, e.g., gifted programs, where their elusive potentials can best be realized.

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Footnotes

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Analyses of Variance for the Total Group and the Racial Groups for the Five Affective Measures

Measure	Total Group n = 193		Racial Group: Anglo-American n = 40		Asian-American n = 34		Black-American n = 69		Hispanic-American n = 50		Main Square	F
Peirs-Harris Self-Concept	61.25	11.47	61.98	10.68	54.74	14.55	63.45	9.89	62.06	10.42	610.17	4.93**
Coopersmith	35.77	7.94	36.90	7.73	32.65	8.70	36.38	7.51	36.16	7.84	138.58	2.24
Locus of Control Questionnaire												
Internal	11.79	2.22	11.23	2.20	11.85	1.79	11.79	2.47	12.20	2.09	7.10	1.45
External	4.06	2.11	4.55	2.18	4.12	1.77	4.06	2.26	3.64	2.03	6.18	1.40
Attitude Toward Questionnaire												
Positive Attitude	2.79	0.34	2.75	0.38	2.75	0.39	2.83	0.35	2.80	0.25	0.07	0.62
Negative Attitude	1.95	0.33	1.98	0.28	2.06	0.42	1.88	0.35	1.95	0.25	0.27	2.56
Self-Concept as a Learner Questionaire	3.59	0.57	3.65	0.59	3.35	0.61	3.71	0.56	3.55	0.48	1.05	3.40*

*p < .05.
**p < .01.